

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 2824

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SUBJECT: 1977 FINNISH ANNUAL STUDENT ELECTIONS

REF: 76 HELSINKI 2384

1. SUMMARY: ANNUAL STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS AT FOURTEEN
UNIVERSITY-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS RESULTED IN CONTINUATION OF
RIGHT-CENTER MAJORITY WITH 306 ELECTED VS. 161 LEFTISTS.
FIVE SCHOOLS HAVE CHANGED THEIR ELECTORAL PROCEDURES SO
ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD EVERY TWO YEARS. END SUMMARY

2. THIS YEAR'S STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS RESULTED IN NO
SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF VARIOUS PARTIES
AND BLOCS, AS THE FOLLOWING CONSOLIDATED TOTALS, WITH GAINS
OR LOSSES IN PARENTHESES, INDICATE: CONSERVATIVES 173 (-8);
59 (-1); FINNISH PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE (MAJORITY
COMMUNISTS AND ALLIED SOCIALISTS) 27 (PLUS 1); SWEDISH
22 (PLUS 1); CHRISTIANS 15; NON-SOCIALIST INDEPENDENTS
13; CONSTITUTIONALIST AND OTHER RIGHTISTS 11 (PLUS 5);
LIBERALS 7 (PLUS 1); OTHER SOCIALISTS 1 (PLUS 1).
RIGHT OF CENTER AND CENTER REPRESENTATIVES IN STUDENT
PARLIAMENTS OUTNUMBER LEFTISTS BY 306 TO 161 NATION-
WIDE. IN PRACTICAL TERMS THIS YEAR'S RESULTS OUGHT
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NOT TO HAVE MUCH IF ANY INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF
STUDENT GOVERNMENTS, SINCE THE GOVERNING BLOCS AT EACH
SCHOOL REMAINED THE SAME. LOSSES BY CONSERVATIVES
WERE DUE TO A SLIGHT SHIFT TO THE RIGHT BY STUDENTS
WHO VOTED FOR THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS OR, DUE TO OTHER
REASONS, PRIMARILY PERSONALITY FACTORS. THE SLIGHT
SHIFT TO THE LEFT MAY HAVE COME FROM CENTER PARTY

SUPPORTERS, BUT JUST AS LIKELY EXPLANATION COULD BE THE LOW TURNOUT, ONLY 50 PERCENT NATIONWIDE, WHICH MAY HAVE BENEFITED THE MORE ACTIVIST PARTIES.

3. AT HELSINKI UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION, THE LARGEST IN THE COUNTRY, NONE OF THE MAJOR PARTIES LOST OR GAINED, BUT THE CHRISTIAN LEAGUE AND CONSTITUTIONALISTS EACH PICKED UP ONE SEAT FORMERLY HELD BY INDEPENDENTS. SINCE HELSINKI UNIVERSITY IS ONE OF THE STUDENT UNIONS SWITCHING TO ELECTIONS EVERY TWO YEARS, A STRONG RIGHT AND CENTER MAY ASSURE MORE STABILITY THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN RECENT YEARS. NEW TOTALS: CONSERVATIVES 19; STALINISTS 12; CENTER 8; SOCIAL DEMOCRATS 7; CHRISTIANS 5 (PLUS 1); MAJORITY COMMUNISTS 4; LIBERALS 2; SWEDISH 2; CONSTITUTIONALISTS 1 (PLUS 1).

4. A LEFTIST MAJORITY REMAINS AT TAMPERE UNIVERSITY, MAJORITY COMMUNISTS GAINED ONE SEAT AND CONSERVATIVES AND CENTER PARTY EACH LOST ONE, BUT LIBERALS GAINED ONE RESTORING THAT PARTY TO THE STUDENT PARLIAMENT. NEW TOTALS: CONSERVATIVES 11 (-1); STALINISTS 10; MAJORITY COMMUNISTS 6 (PLUS 1); SOCIAL DEMOCRATS 6; CENTER 5 (-1); CHRISTIANS 1; LIBERALS 1 (PLUS 1). FOLLOWING PREVIOUS PATTERNS, WE EXPECT A CENTER-LEFT COALITION WILL BE FORMED.

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5. THE CHANGE TO TWO YEAR TERMS OUGHT NOT TO CHANGE MATTERS AT THE FOUR OTHER SCHOOLS, BESIDES HELSINKI UNIVERSITY, WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A SWITCH TO TWO YEAR TERMS (HELSINKI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, VAASA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, TAMPERE TECHNICAL SCHOOL, HELSINKI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY), BECAUSE THESE SCHOOLS HAVE SOLID RIGHT OF CENTER MAJORITIES.

6. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN A RISE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTY YOUTH GROUPS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, AND MANY YOUNG POLITICIANS CONSIDER THEM TO BE A BETTER AVENUE FOR POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT THAN THE STUDENT UNIONS. HOWEVER, SINCE VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE STUDENT POLITICIANS ARE ACTIVE IN THEIR PARTY'S YOUTH GROUPS, STUDENT POLITICS WILL CONTINUE TO BE A TRAINING GROUND FOR AT LEAST SOME OF FINLAND'S FUTURE LEADERS.
RIDGWAY

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